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Senator Allen examines establishing Waterways Trust Fund

Lansing – State Sen. Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) plans to pursue establishing a Waterways Trust Fund, similar to the Natural Resources Trust Fund, to protect Michigan's many waterways.

"Michigan truly is a 'Water Wonderland,'" Allen said. "We need to establish this trust fund in order to guarantee that our lakes and rivers remain accessible."

Money flowing into the fund would be paid for by boaters and used explicitly for the maintenance and development of water access.

There are more than 900,000 watercrafts registered in the state, more than registered by any other governmental entity in the world. Annually, boating contributes \$2 billion to Michigan's economy, \$200 million of which impacts local marina communities.

The state of Michigan has more than 3,000 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, 38,000 square miles of Great Lakes, 11,000 inland lakes and 36,300 miles of rivers.

"We need to maintain our waterways," Allen said. "Through sound investment and protection, we will ensure that future generations can enjoy Michigan's treasures."

Maintenance and upgrade needs in the Harbors and Docks program alone exceed \$200 million. Recent low water levels have increased the need for dredging of harbors and ramp areas in order to maintain facility usability.

Establishing the fund would require a constitutional amendment and the issue would then be placed on the ballot in the next election.

If passed by voters, the trust fund would have a protected stream of funding and be insulated from budget reductions.

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